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Security Council

Sixty-second year

Provisional

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Wednesday, 2 May 2007, 12.10 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Khalilzad	(United States of America)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Verbeke
	China	Mr. Li Junhua
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Peru	Mr. Voto-Bernales
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Qahtani
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by the Head of the Security Council mission on the Kosovo issue

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07-32817 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 12.10 p.m.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President: As this is the first meeting of the Security Council for the month of May, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Sir Emyr Jones Parry, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, for his service as President of the Security Council for the month of April 2007. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Jones Parry for the great diplomatic skill with which he conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Briefing by the Head of the Security Council mission on the Kosovo issue

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Johan Verbeke, Permanent Representative of Belgium and the head of the Security Council mission on the Kosovo issue.

I would like to welcome the return of the members of the Council and the Secretariat who took part in the mission on the Kosovo issue.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Verbeke, head of the Security Council mission on the Kosovo issue.

Mr. Verbeke (Belgium): It is the usual practice that, shortly after a Security Council mission returns to New York, the head of the mission briefs the Council. I will keep this briefing short. I will not give a comprehensive overview of all the meetings and field trips, but I will focus on some highlights of the mission's visit to the region and share some preliminary observations. Before I start, however, I would like to thank all my colleagues for their cooperation and valuable contribution to the mission. I also would like to extend my gratitude to the members of the Secretariat who accompanied us and played a crucial role both in the preparation and in the execution of the mission.

Let me first of all recall the nature of the mission. As members know, the Security Council, following a suggestion made by our Russian colleague, decided to undertake a mission on the Kosovo issue. The mission was essentially an information mission. As the terms of reference pointed out, "in the light of the recent submission of the United Nations Special Envoy's set of proposals to the Security Council, the Council has decided to give its members the opportunity to inform themselves on the situation on the ground"; the purpose of the mission was "to allow the Security Council to have an informed understanding of the political, social and economic situation in Kosovo", and that through a balanced and comprehensive programme of meetings and field trips.

The mission started with meetings in Brussels on Wednesday, 25 April with the Secretary General of NATO, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer; the European Union's Special Envoy for Status Talks, Stephan Lehne; and European Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn. Their messages were quite similar. For them, the status quo is untenable, expectations are high, and delay in the determination of Kosovo's status could put Kosovo and the region at risk. They also stated their full support for Ahtisaari's recommendations and settlement proposal. From the briefings, it appeared that the both the European Union and NATO are prepared to assume their responsibilities in the framework of Kosovo's future status. Planning is ongoing, but such planning, they insisted, does not prejudge the final outcome of the future status process. During the lunch hosted by the European Union in Pristina, details of that planning process were provided. Finally, the representatives of both organizations stressed that the final decision on the status of Kosovo should be endorsed by a Security Council resolution under Chapter VII.

In Belgrade on Thursday, 26 April, the mission's main interlocutors — President Tadić, Prime Minister Koštunica, members of the negotiating team, the President of the Coordination Centre for Kosovo, and almost all members of the party caucuses — firmly rejected the Kosovo settlement proposal and any solution that would entail any form of independence for Kosovo. Instead, they argued for substantial autonomy of Kosovo within Serbia and under international supervision. They also called for further negotiations. Another recurring theme in our meetings

in Belgrade was the lack of full implementation of resolution 1244 (1999), in particular with regard to the return of internally displaced persons. According to Belgrade's authorities, only 2-5 per cent of internally displaced persons have been able to return since 1999.

The issue of return was also regularly raised during the mission's visit to Kosovo. Its complex nature was further illustrated by field trips to Svinjare and Brestovik. Several reasons were given to explain the limited number of returnees: security concerns, the poor economic situation, the lack of access to social services, as well as procedural obstacles.

In Pristina on Friday, 27 and Saturday, 28 April, the mission had the opportunity to meet with a broad spectrum of actors, both international and local. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Rücker, underlined that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) had achieved everything that was achievable. It had established Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, rule of law structures and institutions required for a market economy. According to the Special Representative, further progress was dependent on a resolution of Kosovo's status.

That assessment was echoed by the representatives of the Kosovo Unity Team, including President Sejdiu and Prime Minister Çeku. They expressed their unanimous support for the Kosovo settlement proposal and status recommendation, and stressed their commitment to implement the settlement proposal in its entirety. They underlined that Kosovo was committed to a multiethnic State whose goal would be integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. A similar message was expressed by the ministers of the Kosovo Government, Assembly leaders and leaders from minority communities. For Kosovo Serb representatives, however, including Bishop Artemije of the Serbian Orthodox Church and Kosovo Serbs we met with in northern Mitrovica, independence was clearly not an option.

The mission concluded its visit with a meeting with Special Envoy Ahtisaari in Vienna, which gave mission participants the opportunity to have an informal exchange on various aspects of his settlement proposal.

I would like to end with some provisional observations.

First, I think, the mission lived up to its expectations. It did indeed provide its participants with an opportunity to obtain first-hand information on the situation in Kosovo. As a result, the concrete reality of the Kosovo issue has become clear — more than before — instead of being a rather abstract problem.

Secondly, Kosovo's society is still recovering from the wounds inflicted by the conflict. To a large extent, Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb communities live separately from each other. There are also differences in the way both communities look to the future. While the Kosovo Albanian community is confident, the Kosovo Serb community is more apprehensive about its prospects for the future.

Thirdly, the commitment and readiness conveyed by Kosovo's political leaders to build a multi-ethnic Kosovo for all its communities was encouraging. The creation of such a multi-ethnic society will, however, require substantial effort.

Fourthly, over the years the Provisional Institutions and UNMIK have made significant progress in the implementation of the standards for Kosovo, for example, in establishing Provisional Institutions that are functional and that are founded on the principles of ownership and accountability. The Provisional Institutions expressed their commitment to continue and strengthen the implementation of the standards, in particular those relating to the conditions of life of Kosovo's minority communities.

Fifthly, as regards the critical issue of the return of internally displaced persons, the numbers of sustainable returns continue to be very low. Although structures for return are in place, the lack of economic prospects, difficulties associated with freedom of movement and security-related concerns were mentioned as defining reasons why returns remain limited. Opposing points of view exist on whether a definition of the status of Kosovo would facilitate or hinder the returns process.

Sixthly, with regard to status, the positions of the sides on the Kosovo settlement proposal remain far apart. While the Belgrade authorities and all Kosovo Serb interlocutors remained firmly opposed to the Kosovo settlement proposal and rejected a solution that would entail any form of independence, Kosovo Albanian representatives expressed clear and unambiguous support for the Kosovo settlement proposal and recommendation on Kosovo's future

status. Expectations among the majority Kosovo Albanian population for an early resolution of Kosovo's future status are very high.

Finally, the mission noted the importance stressed by many of promoting a European perspective for the region, including for Kosovo. These European prospects can provide direction for future political and economic development and thus contribute to consolidating stability in Kosovo and, by extension, in the region as a whole.

The President: On behalf of the Securit Council, I would like to thank Ambassador Verbeke fo his able leadership of the mission and for his briefing.

The Security Council has thus concluded th present stage of its consideration of the item on it agenda. The next meeting to discuss the written repo of the mission will be fixed in consultation with th members of the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.